

Prison-Ashram Project

March 1980

Newsletter

BACK FROM OUR WINTER TOUR . . .

Sita and I have just recently returned from our trip along the East Coast; in fact, she's still wading through the piles of mail and I'm still trying to recover my voice. But apart from that and needing a slight rest, the tour was more beautiful than we had ever imagined. All tolled, we gave eighteen prison workshops and about the same number of public lectures or seminars, plus a few radio shows and interviews. We had the great fortune of meeting hundreds of you whom we've known only through the mails until now. As always, just sitting with you all, inside and outside of prison, was a great blessing. Everywhere we went, it was obvious that we were home; and everyone we met was our family. We had many moving experiences and profound moments during the tour, yet there doesn't seem to be any way to try to recapture them in words for this newsletter. Allow me to say humbly that our involvement in this work continues to be among the greatest privileges in our lives. Although we can't share the actual moments of our meetings with you, we'd like to at least use this newsletter to share some of the more meaningful dialogues and situations people have found themselves in. We hope that something you may find in this newsletter serves a need you feel today.

Bo & Sita Lopez

A POWERFUL PRACTICE FOR "SEEING"

This technique requires a partner, who can be anyone at all who agrees to try it with you; you needn't be best friends. It'll take a total of about 20 minutes, and it will provide very powerful experiences if you do it simply and sincerely. There's no talking, and no smiling or laughing. Only the eyes are used. Sit opposite each other, either in chairs or on the floor (see photo). Agree beforehand which one of you will start with eyes closed and which one with eyes open. The partner with eyes closed will simply sit perfectly still until the other says "okay" (about five minutes or so).

So, you're now sitting opposite your partner who has his eyes closed. Take this rare opportunity to study him (or her) without embarrassment. Look into his face, past the "front" which he keeps up for the world (you can use this sheet for guidance through this procedure). Now as you look into his face, look for the traces of sorrow over losing someone he loved; all of us have had that experience—a family member dying, or a lover walking out on us—look for that memory and feel your personal understanding for your partner's hurt.

Now look for signs of fear—from the slight social tension over this unusual practice, to the deeper fears of trusting people, of being alone, of being hurt again. Realize that your partner, just like you, has been kicked around by many people in this lifetime, and has tried to hide himself in many ways so that he can't get kicked around anymore. In seeing this part of your partner's life experiences, again feel personally your own identification with such experiences, and more of your common ground.

And now look into your partner's face for his general confusion; that question-mark hanging over his head, which is over your head also, wondering what life is really all about. That part of him who's always just been trying to understand his own life, understand what's going to happen, what to do, etc. See his basic sincerity as a human being, just like you, who's simply trying to make sense of things and to feel good, feel safe. Spend a few minutes realizing all of these things that are the same for your partner as they are for you, and allow your own love and compassion for this other human being to grow through your eyes. Allow yourself to radiate complete understanding and acceptance and love through your eyes



toward this other human being who's just like you, who's just struggling to feel alright.

Now softly say "okay" and close your eyes while your partner takes this sheet of instructions and follows them just as you did.

After both of you have gone this far (total time of about 10-15 minutes), then both of you open your eyes and look directly into each other's eyes. Allow yourself to be more open and honest—without talking—than you've ever been in your life. Simply look at your partner in recognition that you are meeting in the living spirit; that you've just seen each other truly, and accepted each other fully, being all your differences. Keep looking and opening and offering understanding for a few minutes, and then end the practice by bowing slightly to each other in appreciation.

The photo on this page shows two Michigan prison inmates doing this practice perfectly. If you study their faces closely, even through a photograph you can feel the honesty and power of what's going on. After awhile of practicing these techniques with a variety of partners, what happens is that we begin seeing *everyone* more clearly, which helps us to drop our games and fears and yet not get too caught in other people's games and fears either. We walk around with vision which sees that we are all on the same journey, whether we're aware of it or not.

LETTERS . . .

Dear Bo,

I've been in such a state of confusion lately, looking for answers and continually drawing blanks. The administration here plays so many mind-games with us! They keep trying to provoke me into reverting back to my old ways, my violent ways, and it's really hard for me sometimes. I chose the path of meditation and yoga to overcome my violent nature, for I realized (somewhat late) that violence doesn't solve anything.

Before I was busted in 1976, I was a member of an outlaw motorcycle gang on the East Coast. I also served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps before that. I fought in Viet Nam, Cambodia, and as a biker I fought in many gang wars on the streets of New Jersey. I am serving fifty-five years in prison for killing a man in a bar fight. When I arrived here I started studying my life, and realized that I haven't gained or proven a thing through violence.

But I'm sure you know how rough life can be for someone who tries to be gentle and wise in prison. So many people mistake gentleness for weakness; and I am by no means weak, but I don't want to have to hurt someone to prove it. Every time someone in here tries to provoke me, I do my best to return their animosity with love, but man, it's *really hard*, you know? I try, I really try. But this place is so full of blind ignorance and prejudice, and it shouldn't be that way. Prejudice and ignorance make me angrier than anything else. I meditate and pray twice each day...to erase prejudice and ignorance from the universe, to bring all of mankind closer together, that we may live in peace and harmony with each other.

And believe me, receiving letters from people who really care helps a lot. May you always walk in sunshine and peace.

Love, "Trash"

Okla. State Prison

Dear Trash,

You asked about how to be gentle without it being mistaken for weakness. That's one of the most common problems prison friends have, so don't feel alone. Gentleness—true gentleness—is much more an internal thing than a bunch of new behavior patterns. You've already started feeling gentler toward God, toward life, toward yourself, so of course you feel gentler toward others as well. But you don't necessarily have to do things so differently that people might misinterpret you. Love everyone every day a little bit more, see all the confusion and struggle around you; but at the same time, be very aware of where people are at, and act accordingly. There's a great story about a cobra who goes to a saint and asks for teachings. The saint said, "From now on, don't attack or bite people anymore." So the cobra went on his way, and sat by the side of the village path thinking over the saint's advice. Gradually all the people who passed him began realizing that the snake was no longer any sort of threat, and they started kicking him, throwing rocks at him, poking him with sticks and abusing him and being cruel. One day the saint walked by and saw this cobra in miserable shape, all bloody and bruised, and said "What's happened to you?" The snake replied that he was merely following the teaching of not biting people anymore. The saint looked down with love in his eyes and said, "But I didn't tell you not to hiss!"

Perhaps, given the scary and brutal conditions in our prisons, it's often necessary to hiss. But even as you hiss, or maintain a tough-guy image, you can be doing it in such a way that 1) you aren't really all sucked up into it like you used to be; and 2) most of the time you're living in a vibe which is sort of an open invitation for other people to be able to drop their games with you. This doesn't mean you try to *convince* others to do anything at all; you simply do your own time in a way which allows the people around you to join you, or to be however they want to be, and either way is alright with you.

Right now you're "trying" very hard to be spiritual, and you're seeing all the negativity and ignorance around you as your obstacles. But hard as it may be to understand, it's precisely the awful, insane stuff that is your spiritual journey. Every day is one more spiritual teaching: God gives you hassles and conflicts, you respond to them, and in the way you respond you've either taken a step forward or backward that day. And then the next, and the next... That's what it is for all of us. People who live in comfortable places with few hassles don't have an easier *spiritual* journey than you do; that may be an easier *worldly* journey, but the *spiritual* journey is paved with struggle.

So, accept yourself fully, my friend. Be patient with yourself and with the whole crazy process of spiritual growth. Just keep quieting your mind through meditation and other practices, and start each day with a simple prayer that you do the best you can for that one day. And at the end of the day, take a few minutes to review all that happened, and forgive yourself and others for whatever didn't go well. These simple daily practices will help to bring deep peace to your Heart; it just takes time—but then, what else is there to do anyway?

I Love You,

Bo

Dear Sita & Bo,

Well, it's been a year now and I finally went to trial. I've been sentenced to life imprisonment (which is only twenty-five years here in Canada); however, I am eligible for parole after ten years. I thought the "wait" would never end, but it has and my heart is full of joy... I feel as though I'm finally going somewhere. Even so, my time in this small building has served great purpose... I've seen a lot of faces come and go, I've learned a lot about myself and others. I've learned, or rather, now understand, the meaning behind "Inside-Out." It's really just a fantastic little book. Indeed, my soul has been set free from the barriers I had trapped myself within. I am actually glad (though I'm sure some see me as "mad") for the time I've received. Society is giving me a gift I would never have given myself: A chance to find my true self. Not only that, but they are giving me time; time... Society has always seemed to me to be a mad rush of tension. Now I have ten years to sit back and learn about what life is really all about. Each day my spirit becomes stronger as it reaches the heights found in becoming one with God...Love...the Universe.

My hatha yoga is coming along so smoothly; my body is as flexible as a rubber band. I was having trouble meditating, but I believe the problem was being too caught up in the future. Slowly but surely I am simmering down. It's true: Suffering is a part of the great "awakening". When I get to the women's prison, I certainly hope to find others involved with Inside-Out. It would be just excellent to have or rather share in fellowship; thus far the climb has been alone.

This Earth is just one physical plane of many... of an eternity of life after life again and again. God bless you, Love & Peace—

Susie

Calgary Remand Center

THE PRISON-ASHRAM PROJECT FAMILY . . .

PRISON-ASHRAM PROJECT

2459 Fawn Creek Lane
Escondido, Ca. 92026

Write to us to get on our mailing list, to make donations to receive INSIDE-OUT and these newsletters, to inquire about lectures or workshops, or to contact Bo and Sita Lozoff. A limited number of tapes are also available through this address, including the PRISON YOGA package of nine cassettes for group use.

INSIDE-OUT PEN PALS

Box 468
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

This is the address for getting connected with a pen-pal who's interested in having a spiritual friend. Write for general info. & guidelines; your name will not be published on any sort of list.

PRISON BOOK PROJECT

Box 746
Newport, R.I. 02840

HANUMAN PRISON LIBRARY PROJECT

Box 231
Wolf Creek, Oregon 94974

Write to request or to donate spiritual books of any nature. If the project doesn't have an exact title, they'll try to get it or to send a book of a similar subject area. Write *only* to the book project closer to you, to help save on postage.

OTHER RESOURCES . . .

Following are some of the latest offerings which have been sent to us. Generally these are *free* resources for prison inmates, unless the following descriptions say otherwise. Being listed here doesn't imply a personal endorsement from Sita and myself, because in most cases, we've never met these folks. We're simply sharing information here, and trust that you'll be able to decide what feels right for your own journey.—Bo

ARCANA WORKSHOPS

407 N Maple Dr., #214
Beverly Hills, Ca. 90210

"*Thoughtline*" is a monthly publication based on ideas, teachings from Alice A. Bailey, and our own learning experiences. You are invited to try our thinking on for size; we will send you *Thoughtline* free for six months."

PAUL L. DEMPSEY

Box 818
Atascadero, Ca. 93422

"I will send free tapes as gifts to anyone requesting them."

GOODBODIES NATURAL FOODSTUFFS

RR 1
Abercorn, Quebec CANADA JOE 1B0

"We are into helping inmates who are trying to arrange to have natural foods, vitamins, etc."

HOLY ORDER OF MANS

Discipleship Movement
Box 14727

San Francisco, Ca. 94114

"The H.O.M. is a Christian service and teaching order . . . The Order is open to all who wish to come to a deeper relationship to the Christ within. We offer these free books plus a correspondence course in the Tree of Life lessons, with the opportunity of regular spiritual work with a priest of the Order."

BOOKS: The Golden Force; The Golden Nuggets; Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus of Galilee; Christ the Lord; and Yoke of Light

ICOA

Box 1107
Chatsworth, Ca. 91311

"ICOA, or Int'l. Center of Alternatives, is associated with many other groups and publishers of new-age, new-thought periodicals, books, and study courses. ICOA will make xeroxes of your letters requesting materials, teachers, visitors, pen-pals, etc., and then forward them to where they will receive the greatest attention."

MATAGIRI

Mt. Tremper, N.Y. 12457

"We are continuing to offer free subscriptions to our quarterly, *Collaboration*, to any prisoner who cannot afford to subscribe. We can also send damaged books from time to time, which deal with yoga, philosophy, etc."

SANT MAT FELLOWSHIP

Box 26623
Houston, Texas 77207

"Sant Mat is a natural path open to all (also called "Surat Shabd Yoga"); no fees are charged. Upon request we will send a small packet of literature. After reading it, please feel free to request books, etc., including personal correspondence."

SATCHIDANANDA ASHRAM

Box 108, Rt. 97
Pomfret Center, Ct. 06259

"Free packet of literature covering the various aspects of integral yoga—hatha, pranayama, meditation, diet, philosophy and more. Also, single issues of *Integral Yoga* magazine, with articles about the life & teachings of Rev. Sri Swami Satchidananda."

SCANDINAVIAN YOGA & MEDITATION SCHOOL

Hausmannsgt. 27
Oslo 1 NORWAY

We would be happy to send an 80-page report, *Medical & Psychological Scientific Research on Yoga & Meditation*. It is annotated and lists 452 reports on effects and possible applications."

SHASTA ABBEY

Box 478
Mt. Shasta, Ca. 96067

"We offer free spiritual guidance, the publication *Zen Meditation*, and the *Journal of Shasta Abbey* at reduced rates and a small amount of free Buddhist literature."

SPIRALS

Box 29472
San Francisco, Ca. 94129

"We would like to offer any prison library a free subscription to *Spirals*, a metaphysical publication with a definite spiritual slant."

TRANS-PHYSICAL SCIENCE CENTER

Drawer 3046
Santa Clara, Ca. 95051
Attn: Dr. M. Lee Coss

"To serious seekers: Free metaphysical/spiritual development study literature and related books. Also correspondence & spiritual counseling."

TULSA WOMEN OFFENDER'S RESOURCE CENTER

1241 S. Harvard, #215
Tulsa, Okla. 74112

"The program helps female ex-offenders become useful, self-supporting citizens. Includes counseling & job readiness, skill training, education, placement & follow-up."

DORA TENNYSON, Artist

Box 609
Goleta, Ca. 93017



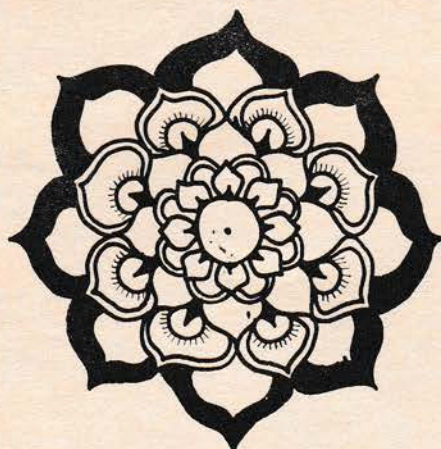
"What I want to do is to mail—free—to any prisoners, my "Christ Light" card, upon request from someone to whom it would be meaningful."

XAT: AMERICAN INDIAN MEDICINE SOCIETY

Box 46139
Seattle, Washington 98146

"The XAT Medicine Society would like to hear from Indian groups behind the walls. We can help you set up our own Native American religion, such as the Sweat Lodge, pipe, and pow-wows."





SPIRITUAL MATERIAL

Address Correction Requested

**A Project of the
Hanuman Foundation**

**PRISON-ASHRAM PROJECT
2459 Fawn Creek Lane
Escondido, Ca. 92026**

I asked for health, that I might do greater things.

I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy.

I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men.

I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.

I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for,

But everything I hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all people most richly blessed.

The Prison-Ashram Project of the Hanuman Foundation has served, since 1973, as a source of materials and advice for prisoners throughout the world who are interested in meditation and general spiritual guidance. The Project is supported solely by private donations, which are fully tax-deductable under the IRS code. Contributions, trusts, grants and the like are always needed and welcomed.